

## 2 Samuel Slide

The Human Brain is divided into 2 hemispheres.

Left and right.

There is a kind of pop psychology that says if you are more left brained- you're more analytical & math minded. Logical- Less emotional.

If you operate more from the right brain, you are more artistic, and emotional.

That's not exactly right. Its more of a caricature of what seems to be going on in our brain.

Psychologist Iain McGilchrist, a former Oxford literary Scholar, and Neuroimaging researcher at Johns Hopkins University wrote the book "The Master and His Emissary". In it he wrote about a new understanding of the way our brain works.

**McGilchrist says what really distinguishes the hemispheres is not what they do- but how they do the same things differently.**

**He believes the brain is divided into two hemispheres so that it can produce two different views of reality.**

**The right focuses on the big picture. The left focuses on details.**

**Both are essential. If you can't see the big picture, you don't understand why you're doing what you're doing. But- if you can't hone in on the details, you can't accomplish the simplest tasks.**

Think about playing a piece of music on a piano.

Its not like the right brain goes "Ahhhh- this is art. I'll take it from here."

And then the left brain goes "Wake me when its over".

Rather, both the left & right brain approach the task from 2 different, but important angles.

The Right brain looks over the piece of music and sees it as a whole. The right brain is thinking about how it starts and finishes and what the piece is trying to say. Its thinking about how all the notes will work together.

The Left brain, meanwhile, is concentrating on small sections at a time. Going note by note. Thinking – "that note on that page corresponds to this key on the keyboard".

If only the left plays the piece- it will likely sound like a bunch of disconnected notes, played with no heart or purpose.

If only the right plays- It will be like Karaoke night. A ton of passion, lots of connection to the piece- but there will be SOOOO many missed notes.

Or in the world of sports- If you played basketball with only the left brain- you could be an incredible free throw shooter. Because shooting free throws takes nothing but cold muscle memory and technique.

However- you would be the last person the coach wants on the court down by 5 in the last 2 minutes. Because you would have absolutely no clue what was going on in the game. You'd just be concentrating on dribbling the basketball- not really paying attention to the clock, or the score, or what the other team was doing on defense.

And anybody who has played music or played a sport- knows- when you hit a slump- your teacher or coach is going to tell you....

“Stop thinking about it and just do it!”-Nike built a whole brand on Right Brain thinking.

The Right brain is the master- that sends the left brain to accomplish missions- Thus the title of his book- The Master and the Emissary.

McGilcrist says that our western culture has primarily been shaped by left brain thinking. We are infatuated with details and precision, but we don't often consider the big picture.

We spend time on day-to-day tasks- getting up- going to work- but don't really think about what that has to do with meaning and purpose- the bigger picture in life.

When McGilcrist was asked to imagine a world where all of us only had one hemisphere.

This is what he said- First about a world of Right Hemisphere people

**“The right hemisphere, if it were really without the left hemisphere, would see a lot of connections between things and would see a broad picture, but it might not be so good at focusing on details. Emotionally, the [tone] might be somewhat melancholic and sad. Because I think it's one of the aspects, I'm afraid, of the right hemisphere's realism and sympathy, a capacity for empathy, that it does feel suffering.**

**So we would be good at coming up with ideas. We might not be good at actually sort of carrying out the nuts and bolts and getting it working as a machine.”**

I FEEL EXPOSED BY THAT PARAGRAPH. I literally say all the time “I'm more of an idea guy” when someone asks me to work out the details of something.

ON the other side- McGilcrist said a world of left brain only people would look like this. **“We would lose sight of the big picture. There'd be an emphasis on the details, instead. There would be a great emphasis on predictability, organizability, anonymity, categorization, loss of the unique and an ability to break things down into parts but not really see what the whole is like. There'd be a need for total control because the left hemisphere is somewhat paranoid. Anger would become the key note in public discourse. Everything would become black and white.**

**We would misunderstand everything that is implicit and metaphorical.”**

Wow. That really does describe us today.

## **2 Samuel Slide**

But this isn't just happening now where we live in 21st century west... Its the first 5 Chapters of Second Samuel.

But before we start this new series going through the book of 2nd Samuel, lets do one a Season 1 recap of 1 Samuel.

Israel- up to the point in history that comes along in 1 Samuel- was led and ruled by prophets and Judges. Samuel- was a mix of a judge and a prophet- and faithfully led Israel for many years. But when Samuel died- the Israelites were tired of being run without a king. They wanted to be like other nations. God told them “I'm your king”... and like a teenager to a parent...they rolled their eyes and said, “You know what we mean.”

So- God warned them. If you want a king- I'll give you one- but...he's going to eventually do terrible things to you and you'll hate him for it.

And Israel said, “Whatever. GIVE US OUR KING!”

And that's when Saul enters the picture- a reluctant king- that eventually becomes a megalomaniac- throwing unpredictable tantrums like a 2 year old in a grocery store.

So God said to Israel. - I'm ripping away the kingdom from him and I'm going to give you another King. So he sends the aging prophet Samuel out into the countryside- to Jesse's house- and Samuel says “One of your boys is gonna be king” So Jesse brings out 6 of his 7 sons, to which Samuel says- “Nope, none of these.” And that's when David walks out of the Sheep pasture, fresh off of killing a bear with his bare hands.

And Samuel said- “That's the one!”

And right on the spot, Samuel anoints David as King of Israel...but also- he's not yet the king and has to wait.

And so he does wait- for 15 years. In the meantime- he slays the Giant Goliath for Israel, moves in with King Saul, becomes best friends with Saul's son Jonathan, and develops a huge fan following. "Saul has a thousand likes, David has 10,000 subscribers" is a modern version of what the people used to chant when David was around. Saul gets insanely jealous...and tries to kill David several times- even chases him around Israel with a small army. Yet every time David has a chance to kill Saul to protect himself- he doesn't take it.

Saul- so caught up in preserving his kingship...makes a bunch of foolish military decisions- and eventually- he and his son Jonathan- die on a battlefield in shame.

AND THAT is where we pick up as we start 2 Samuel.

## **Title Slide "Big Picture Living: How to Live a Life as a Story You Didn't Write"- 2 Samuel 1-5**

The book of Second Samuel is about how God keeps his promise to provide a King and a Kingdom for his people- despite all that they do- including King David- to undermine that promise with their own evil.

In other words, 2 Samuel is about God's faithfulness as Israel's TRUE king- in the midst of all of their sin.

Besides God himself- the main character of 2 Samuel is David- who will finally take the throne and unite Israel in these first chapters.

And sometimes- David lives up to the title God gave him "A man after God's own heart". Other times it becomes ridiculously clear that David IS NOT the king that Israel should really be putting their hope in.

The difference between the two?

### **1) When you live life as a story- you can live it patiently & hopefully.**

It all has to do with whether David is focused on the big picture- on whether he puts himself into the story that God has written and steps into the role God has called him to play.

When David makes dumb decisions...its when he acts like a left-brained only society- when he loses sight of the big picture and his world becomes the very small world of merely his own perceived needs and desires.

We're not going to have time to read all of these chapters- so I'm going to divide this into 2 sections- The Right Brain and Left Brain.

As the book opens- we get an alternate account of the end of King Saul's life...it differs a bit from the one at the end of 1 Samuel.

This guy who says he escaped the battlefield comes to report that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead. So David asked him "What happened?"

## 2 Samuel 1:6-10

6 “I happened to be on Mount Gilboa,” he replied, “and there was Saul, leaning on his spear. At that very moment the chariots and the cavalry were closing in on him. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, so I answered: I’m at your service. 8 He asked me, ‘Who are you?’ I told him: I’m an Amalekite. 9 Then he begged me, ‘Stand over me and kill me, for I’m mortally wounded, but my life still lingers.’ 10 So I stood over him and killed him because I knew that after he had fallen he couldn’t survive. I took the crown that was on his head and the armband that was on his arm, and I’ve brought them here to my lord.”

It's highly likely that this guy is lying. Because the account we get at the end of 1 Samuel is that Saul fell on his own sword on the battlefield to avoid being captured and tortured by the Amalekites.

So what you have here is a guy who is banking on David being happy about Saul's death. He's like “Uh- yeah- I killed Saul and here's the proof.” He is just a scavenger that showed up after the action was over and picked up some souvenirs. He is out for himself.

And shouldn't David be happy about Saul's death? I mean, Saul tried to kill David multiple times. And David could not assume the office of King until he was dead. So it would greatly benefit David to have Saul out of the way.

But that is not how David responds. Look at his mind not on the small details of his life...but on the big picture.

## v 11-12

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and all the men with him did the same. 12 They mourned, wept, and fasted until the evening for those who died by the sword — for Saul, his son Jonathan, the Lord's people, and the house of Israel.

He's mourning not just his friend Jonathan- but Saul- who was out to kill him...and for all the people of Israel. In other words, he's not thinking “Wow! I get to be king and don't have to run from this maniac anymore.”

No- David is in this for the Lord and for his purposes- he's thinking about God's people.

## v14

“Then he asks the Amalekite soldier- How come you weren't afraid to kill Saul. As bad as Saul was, he was the Lord's anointed King- and we can't be taking matters into our own hands.”

See- he's got his right brain in the drivers seat. He's thinking beyond a present moment into the big story of God's sovereignty over his people.

So David, according to the law- and based on the man's own testimony has him executed.

That's when he does a very Right brained big picture thing- he writes and sings a song.

## **v 17**

Music engages the brain and our emotions in a very different sort of way. A song is making connections between life events- Its noticing big patterns connecting them and making them rhyme- sometimes literally.

Writing songs and poetry is a way that humans have sought to work out the big picture for a long long time. To get up out of the day to day hurts and details and acknowledge something bigger happening.

Thats why a lot of the highest and lowest moments we go through as humans are captured and related to in songs. We connect with each other over music.

In fact- Its David who writes a big chunk of the Psalms- which are all songs and poems intended to be sung by Israel to move them out of small left-brained immediate thinking- into big picture right brain- "God is good and he is up to something good" kinda thinking.

And notice- David sings positively about Saul- who was absolutely nasty to him.

## **Back to 1)**

Because when your eyes are up on the bigger picture of who God is and what he is doing- you are not as easily hurt and offended. You are much more ready to show mercy- and to trust a longer process in your life rather than just responding to your immediate situation.

When you live in a larger story- You are much more patient. Think about it. When you read a novel- do you quit the moment something bad happens? Of course not. Why? Because you know the way stories work. If its an author you know well- you know when the bad thing happens to the main character- its just building for the plot and the redeeming ending.

Listen- this is why its so important to read the Bible...and to process it.  
Not just to read it devotionally- what do I get out of this...but to understand the big picture.

In our left-brain only moment to moment culture- we have forgotten the big picture. We are told to write our own story. Be your own author. Create an identity and a plot line for yourself. Be your own main character. And then we stare at all these little stories on social media day after day they reduce big themes down to instantaneous moments- and we're all worried and stressed out and trying moment by moment to make our lives mean something...but we can't.

Because we have drained out our ability to sit patiently and wait. To write a song- a poem- to think through what God is doing. To realize that this is not our story to create- but there is an author outside of us who has made promises and will come through on them.

And the discipline of journaling- of writing out your thoughts about a passage and connecting it to the small details of your life. Your aim in that is not to make the Bible fit into your life..but to take your small story and fit it upwards into the bigger story of what God is doing.

You want to be merciful, patient, and unoffendable? Stop creating your own identity...and figure out who God has called you to be and the role he's called you to play in his story.

Then write a song about it.

That is David's superpower. Remembering the Story God has written- not just for him- but for all of Israel.

And watch how that filters into the day-to-day decisions he has to make.

## **2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19-20**

Three times in this account of David taking the throne- Before he makes big moves- David is directly asking the LORD- “Should I do this?”

This is one of the great gifts of living out the Story God.

The author of the story is alive and well. And he’s opened up a line of communication. Can you imagine if MacBeth could pause and ask Shakespeare- “What should I do here?” or if in the middle of the Two Towers, Frodo could ask Tolkien- “This is getting dark- is everything gonna be ok ?”...or Harry Potter could ask JK Rowling, “Should I trust Snape?”...or Catniss Everdeen speak to someone beyond even the Gamemaster. What if she could talk to Suzanne Collins herself.

This is the gift God gives us. He is the author. He has the authority...and he allows us to seek his wisdom in prayer...and know his story through the Bible.

My question to you is- how often does that get swallowed up in left-brain day-to-day focused only on the immediate- kind of activity?

## **5:22-25**

**The Philistines came up again and spread out in Rephaim Valley. 23 So David inquired of the Lord, and he answered, “Do not attack directly, but circle around behind them and come at them opposite the balsam trees. 24 When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, act decisively, for then the Lord will have gone out ahead of you to strike down the army of the Philistines.” 25 So David did exactly as the Lord commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Geba to Gezer.**

I love this. David is so in tune with God as the author of a story he’s writing- that God is revealing to him how he is going to move- And David is literally betting his life on it.

Listen- when you are living in God’s story- when life is more than day to day moments- you will start to see God in the Day to Day moments. And then you’ll be able to join him in what he’s doing...instead of just asking him to “be with you” or “Bless your day”...when you are actively seeking to obey the Spirit- he’ll reveal to you moments he wants you to take action. To ROUSE YOURSELF and join him.

To slay your day from Geba to Gezer.

This is why I put the O in IHOP. Something we’ve been practicing here is obeying the Spirit. Its why so many of the actions steps we give you with IHOP are connected to praying and asking God what he’s up to and asking him to show you WHO to talk to, who to invite, who to practice hospitality with and with whom to proclaim the gospel.

Work these “Lord, what should I do- into your daily moments... and listen for the LORD to respond. In my experience- this won’t be an audible voice, but often- it will be a story from the Scripture- or a particular verse- which again- the Holy SPIRIT can’t remind you of the Scripture- if you haven’t read it first.

Listen to the way David- who is constantly reminding himself of God's bigger story is able to overflow and cultivate into other people's lives. Of course- I already told you about all the Psalms he wrote- that we still read today as a deep right-brained reminder of the big picture...

...watch what he does as he assumes the kingship in these first 5 chapters.

Who he learns that the men of Jabesh-gilead buried Saul- his enemy- his first act as King is this.

## **2 Samuel 2:5-7**

**5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "The Lord bless you because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord when you buried him. 6 Now, may the Lord show kindness and faithfulness to you, and I will also show the same goodness to you because you have done this deed. 7 Therefore, be strong and valiant, for though Saul your lord is dead, the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."**

His first act as King is both message of gratitude and hope. Don't worry, God has called me at this time to be king. This is a part of what God is doing...and you have played your role well.

If you want to be a non-anxious presence- a beacon of hope for others instead a source of anxiety and anger...get your head out of your day-to-day...and into God's big story.

Transition: Now lets look at the other side of David.

## **2) When you lose sight of God's story- you live a life of fear and compromise.**

If you believe our current cultural Zeitgeist- the recipe for happiness and peace is to write your own story and don't let anyone stand in your way.

Define for yourself what life means and then go out show everybody you're right.

Instead of receiving meaning and identity from the author...be your own author.

But listen- we're not made to be authors. We're supporting characters in a story God is telling.

So when we lose sight of that story...any other story we tell is going to end up being very small and leave out a whole lot of people.

That is the story of Abner and Ish-Bosheth in these first 5 chapters...and unfortunately...David will slip there himself throughout this book from time to time.

## **2 Samuel 2:8-10**

Ish-bosheth is Saul's son who takes the throne of Israel, the northern kingdom, while David reigns over Judah the southern.

But Abner is the one really running the show. Abner is controlling Ish-bosheth behind the scenes- calling the shots.



And in Chapter 2- Abner - because he wants power- sets up a battle with David's men

### **2:17**

Then Abner runs away- like a coward does, but ends up killing one of David's main soldiers by running a spear through his guts when he's not looking.

### **3:1**

Abner eventually turns on Ish-bosheth because he calls Abner out for his sexual sin- And so, as cowards do, instead of admit he's wrong- he turns on Saul's son.

### **3:9-11**

And he threatens Abner and says, "I'm switching sides. Now I'm with David"

Which he tried to make all Ish-Bosheth's fault- but really Abner just wanted to play for a winner.

Eventually- both Abner and Ish-Bosheth are killed.

Both of whom- David mourns. Once again- recognizing God's big picture...he doesn't hate his enemies and rejoice in their deaths.

### **Back to 2)**

See, they both lived lives of fear and compromise. Because they were writing their own stories.... they were chasing their own comfort and glory.

And I wish it stopped with them. But it doesn't.

Even David...the anointed King of Israel that unifies Israel and walks so closely with the LORD...is a man of fearful compromise.

If you read these first 5 chapters- you'll see the cracks in his character.

He marries multiple wives- and has this scene very similar to the one we saw last week with Jacob...where he demands a woman for his wife...just thinking of her as an object.

### **3:14 & 16**

Originally- he had married Michal- Saul's daughter after he killed Goliath...but Michal had long since left him...and re-married another man.

But David- when he gets power- demands she comes back in this very weird transactional relationship where he talks about how many Philistines foreskins he paid for her.

Meanwhile, you can see he has no regard for Michal's current husband..who weeps for her. So Michal and her husband get caught up in this power play between David and Abner. All because of David's libido or his fear of being shamed.

And this is foreshadowing to the later downfall of David in 2 Samuel...which we'll get to in the coming weeks.

## **Back to 2)**

Think about your own recurring temptations to live for yourself.

What seeds of fear and compromise are already in you, tempting you to forget God's big story..and start living moment by moment for yourself.

Because it is all those small moments of compromise- never addressed, never confessed- that add up to the big moment of destruction that end up hurting you and others around you. It will happen to David...but it doesn't have to happen to you.

As John Owen said "You must be killing sin or it will be killing you."

The point is this...and its one the Scripture makes over and over.

As much as Israel needed a unifying king...there was no mere human who could ever be the perfectly righteous- non-anxious, non-comoprising unifier and savior they were looking for.

In fact, in the story God writes in Scripture- every time through the Old Testament when it looks like a promised Messiah has finally arrived...we see their fearful selfishness take over...and we're disappointed again.

The question the Old Testament leaves us with all its failed prophets, priests, and kings...is this? Is there a real king that will never compromise God's story...but always live for his people?

## **3) God will use the mess you've made- if you trust him and join him in the story he has written.**

Let me close with one final observation: It's striking to me that David, God's anointed King, comes to the throne through a MESS. I mean, an absolute, bloody mess. Full of deception and violence and betrayal.

The same thing will be true of Jesus, David's descendant, when he comes to earth one day.

Jesus' birth was one filled with bloodshed and injustice. Herod had every baby under 2 murdered; Rome was oppressive. And yet, through this dark chaos, God brought his King to the throne. On a cross, Jesus was killed- a bloody mess- because of the treachery and violence and injustice done to him. But he did it to pay for your sin. He died the death of an Abner, an Ish-bosheth, and yes...even a David...so that you would be forgiven by the author of the story and invited in to play a beautiful supporting role.

Listen: Your life may feel like a mess—but just as God was sovereign bringing David to the throne and Jesus to the throne through chaos of the cross, he's bringing his Kingdom out of your mess, too.

I'm not saying the mess isn't real or painful. It is. I'm saying the mess isn't the truest, deepest, most eternal reality-- and just as God was sovereign in the mess of these chapters; he's sovereign in the mess of your life, too. Trust him, and join him in what he is doing.